

RICE UNIVERSITY

Jungle Gym

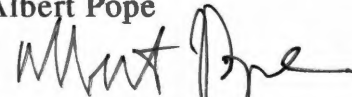
by

Robert Sheh

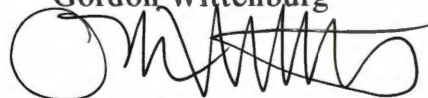
**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Architecture**

APPROVED, Thesis Committee

Albert Pope



Gordon Wittenburg

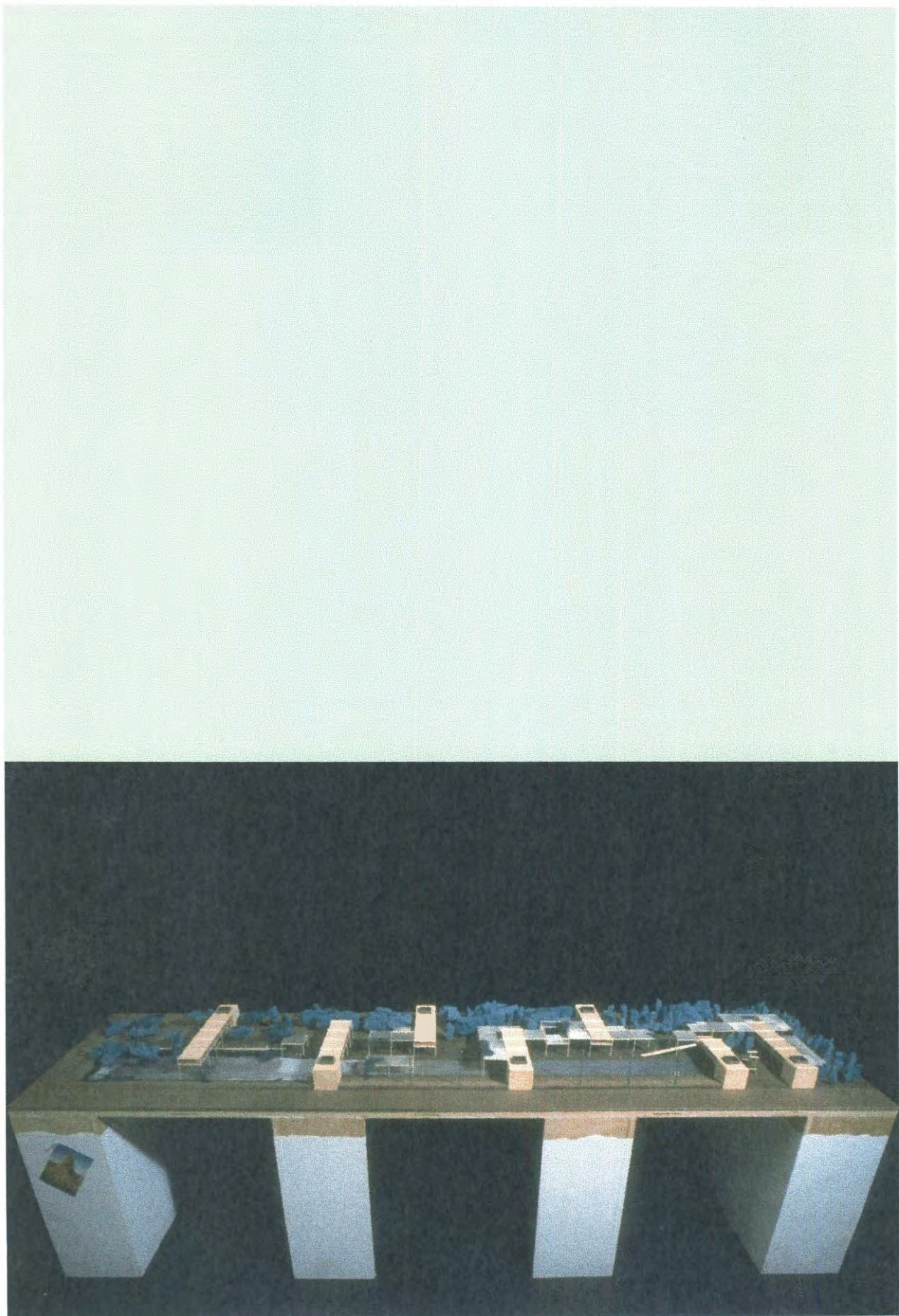


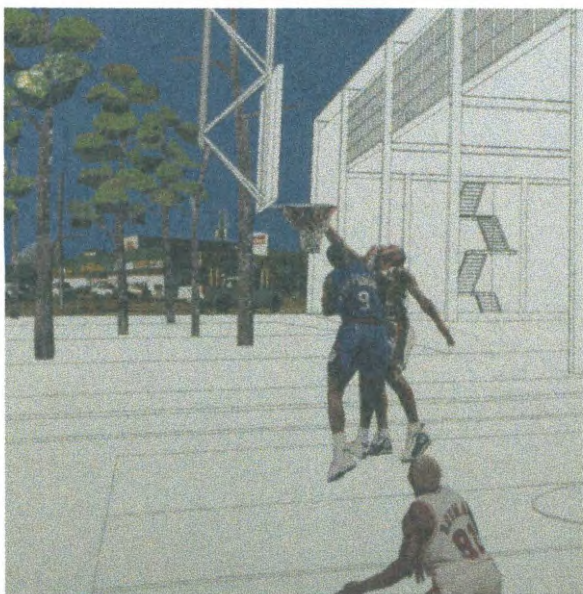
David Guthrie



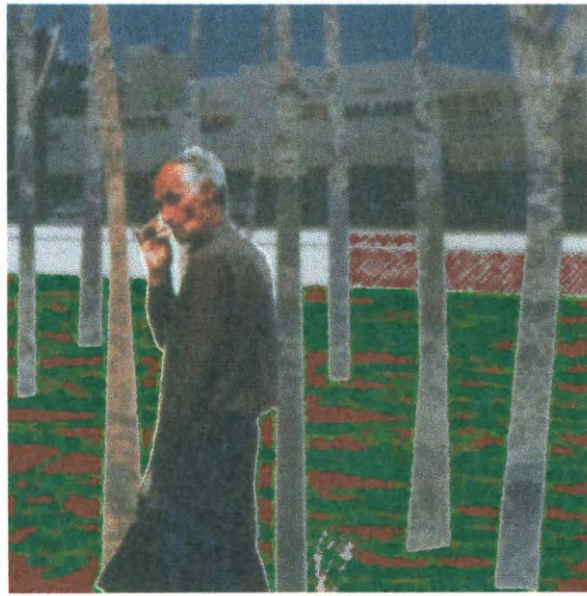
**Houston, Texas
May 1997**

HOUSTON, AUGUST 1996



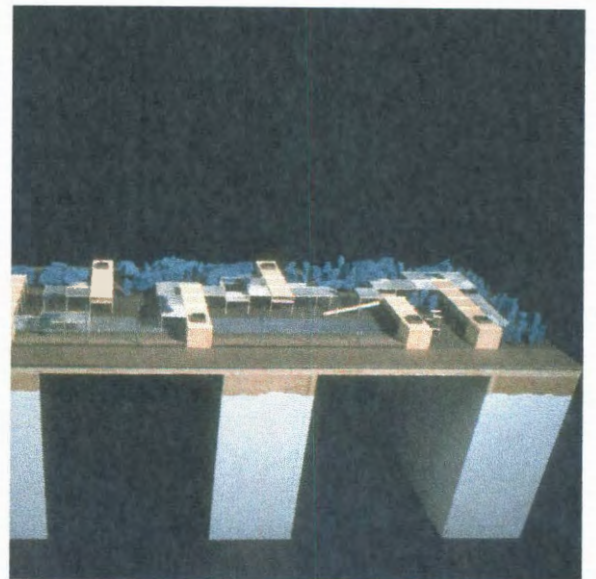
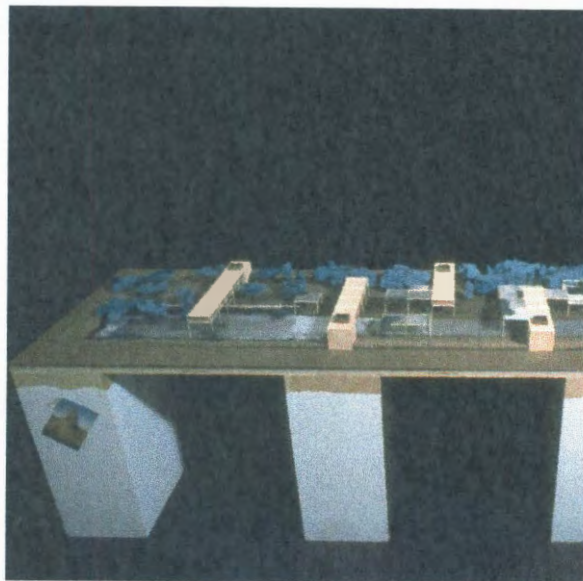
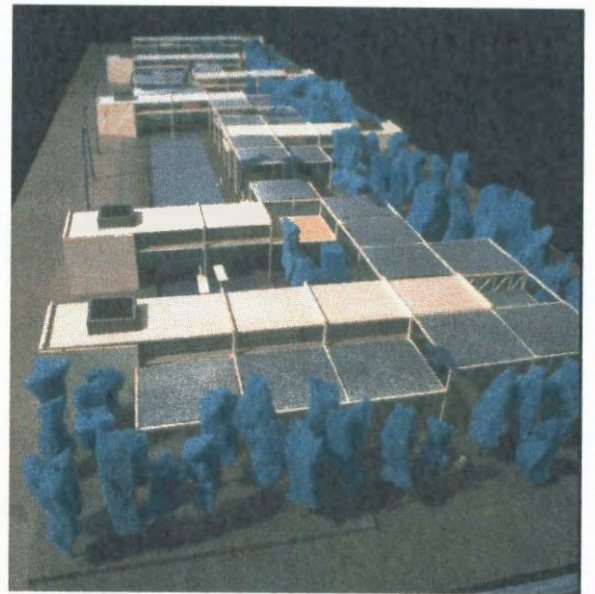
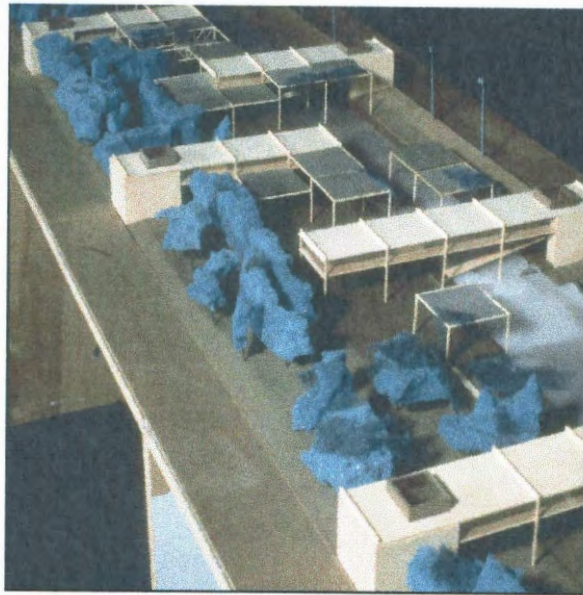
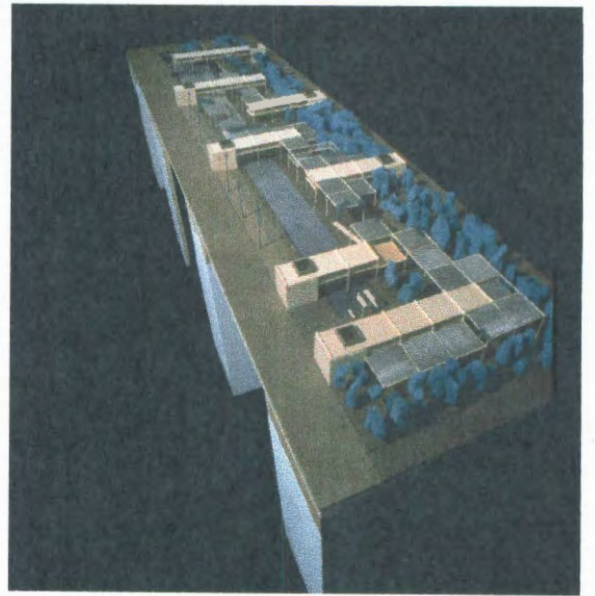
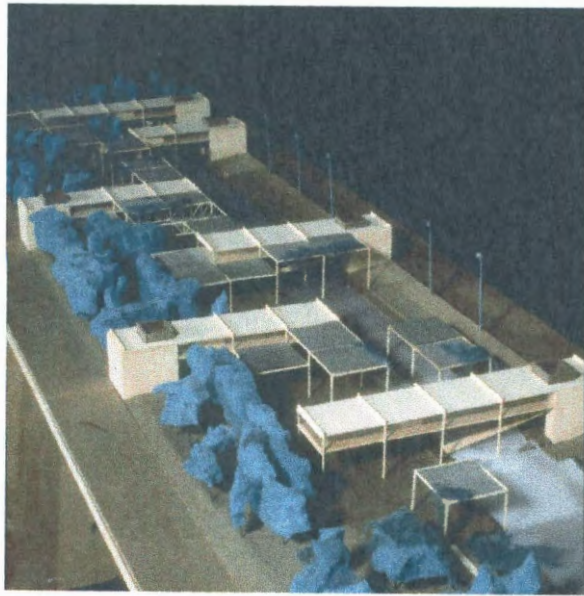


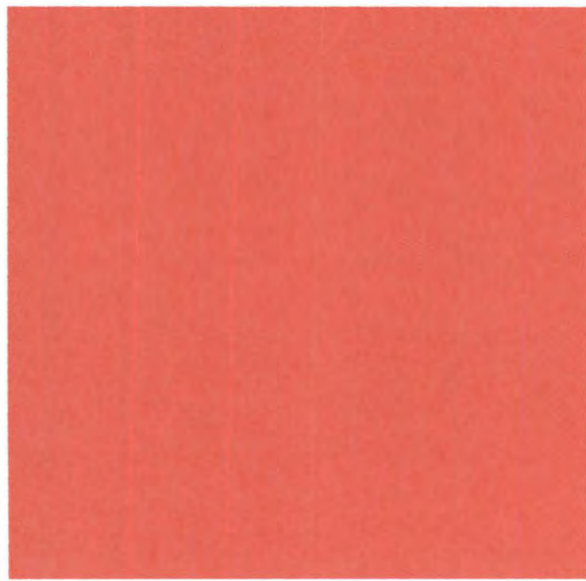
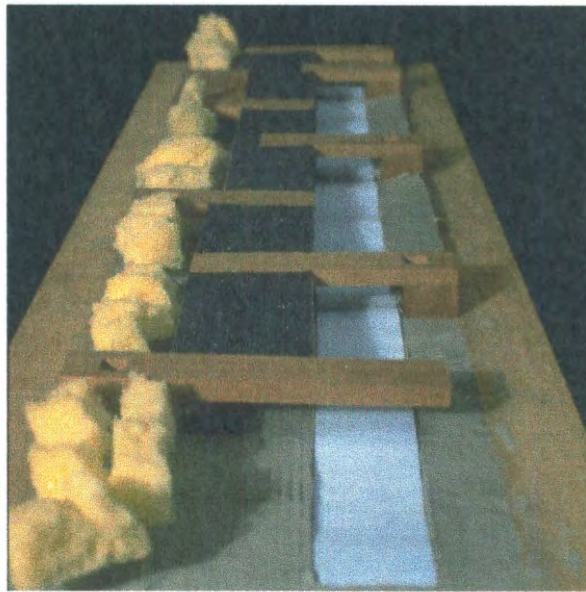
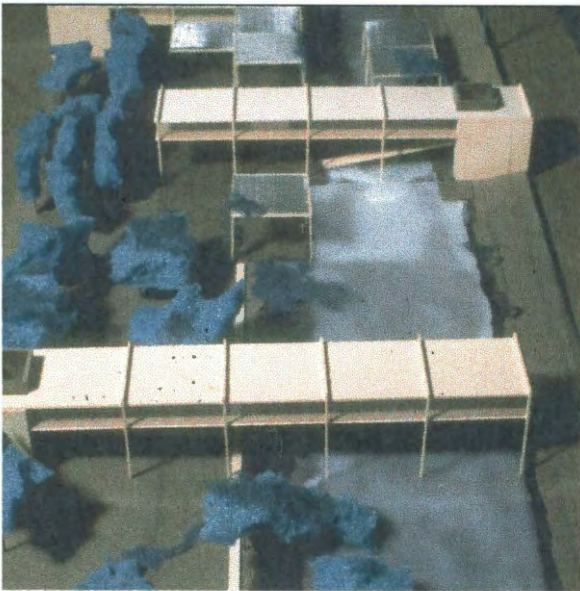
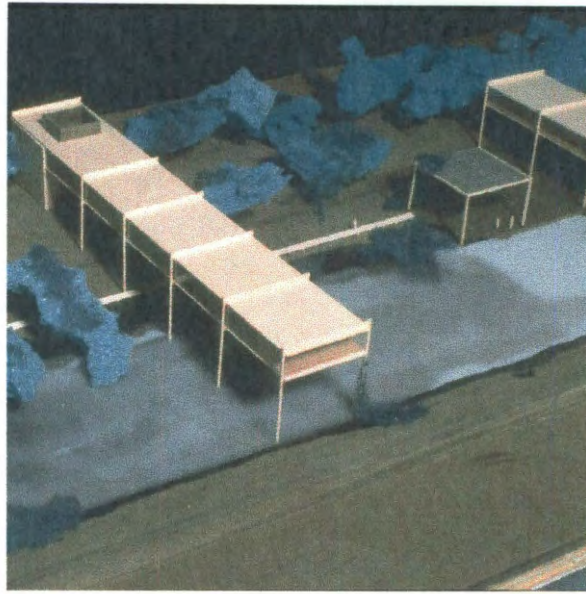
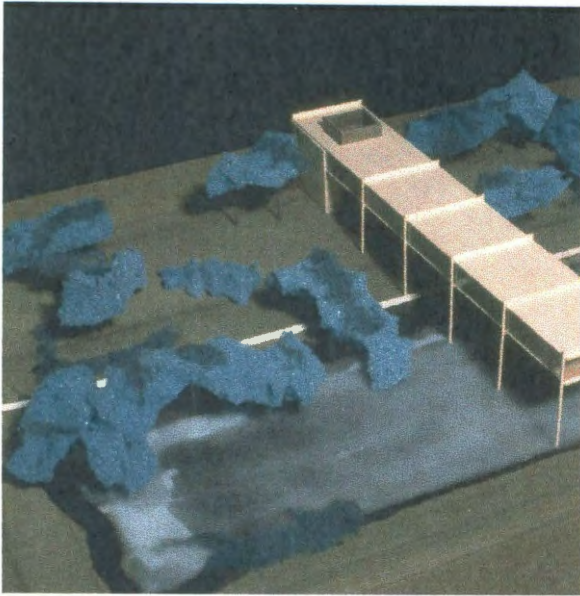
Thanks to the faculty and students at Rice for everything. Thanks to Brett Terpluk for enormous help, support, and work on the model. Most of all thanks to Gina Sheh for endless patience and support.

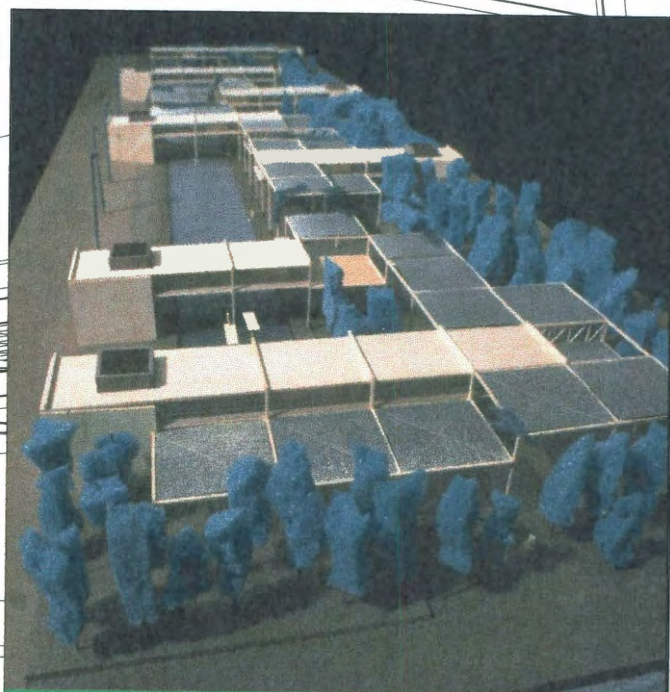
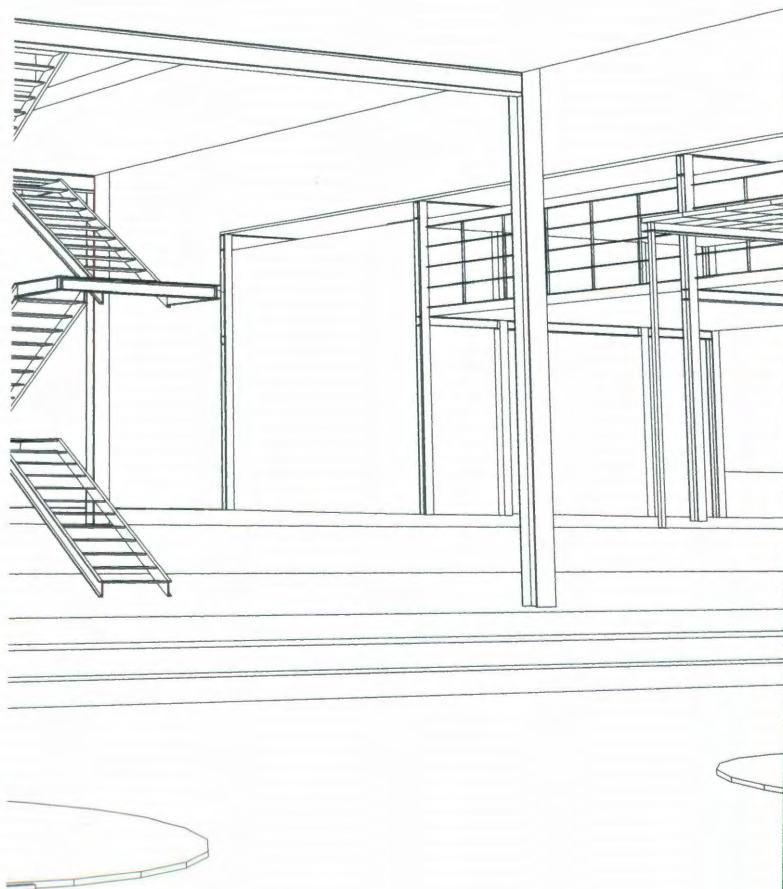
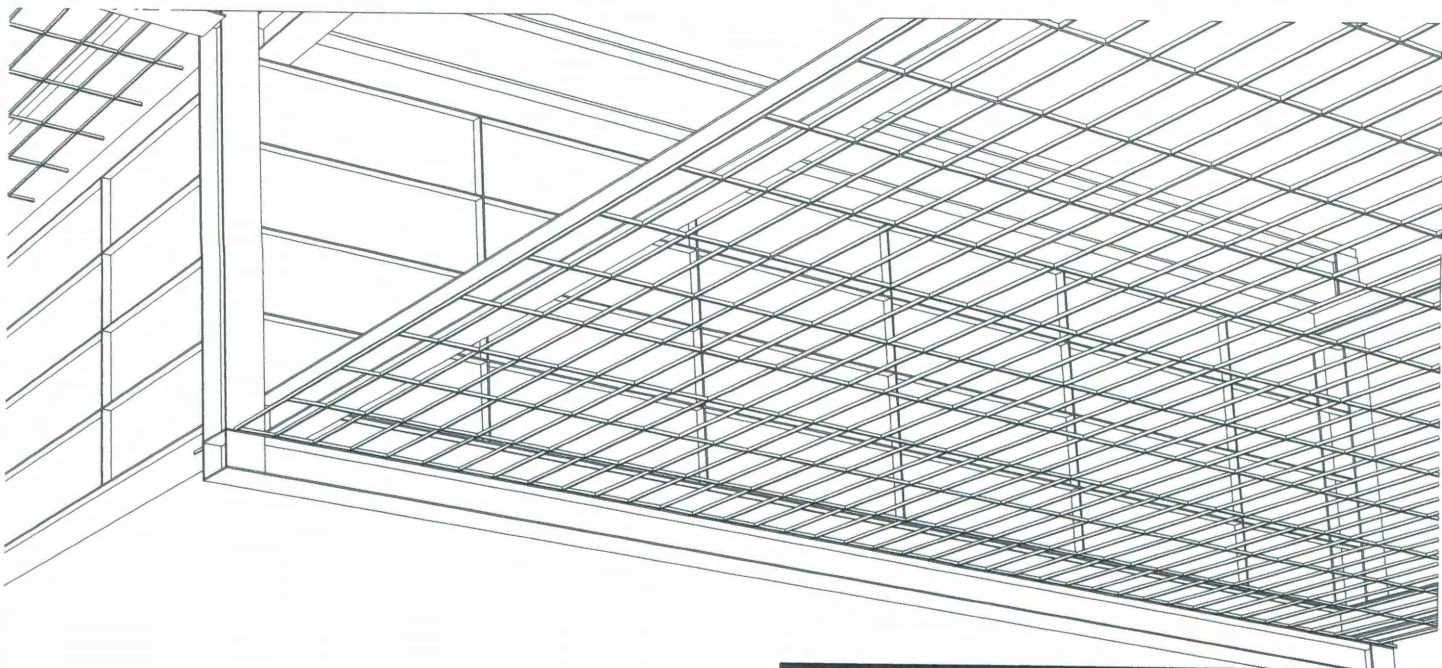


SOURCES

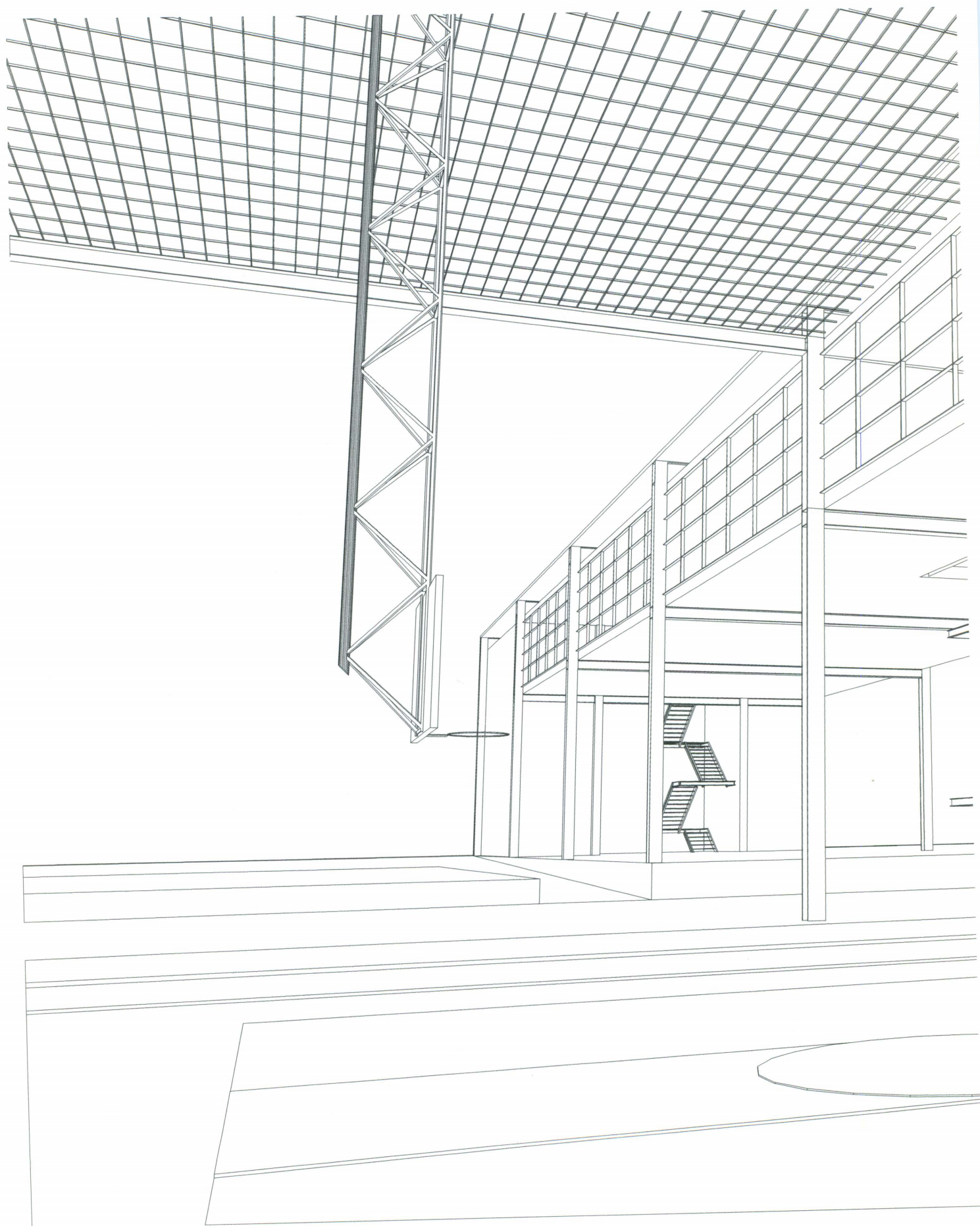
All of the ideas are in the air so there is really nothing original here. Linda Pollak's article "constructing ground" which appeared in the web journal "Architronic" was a significant source. And most importantly, discussions with my director, Albert Pope should be credited

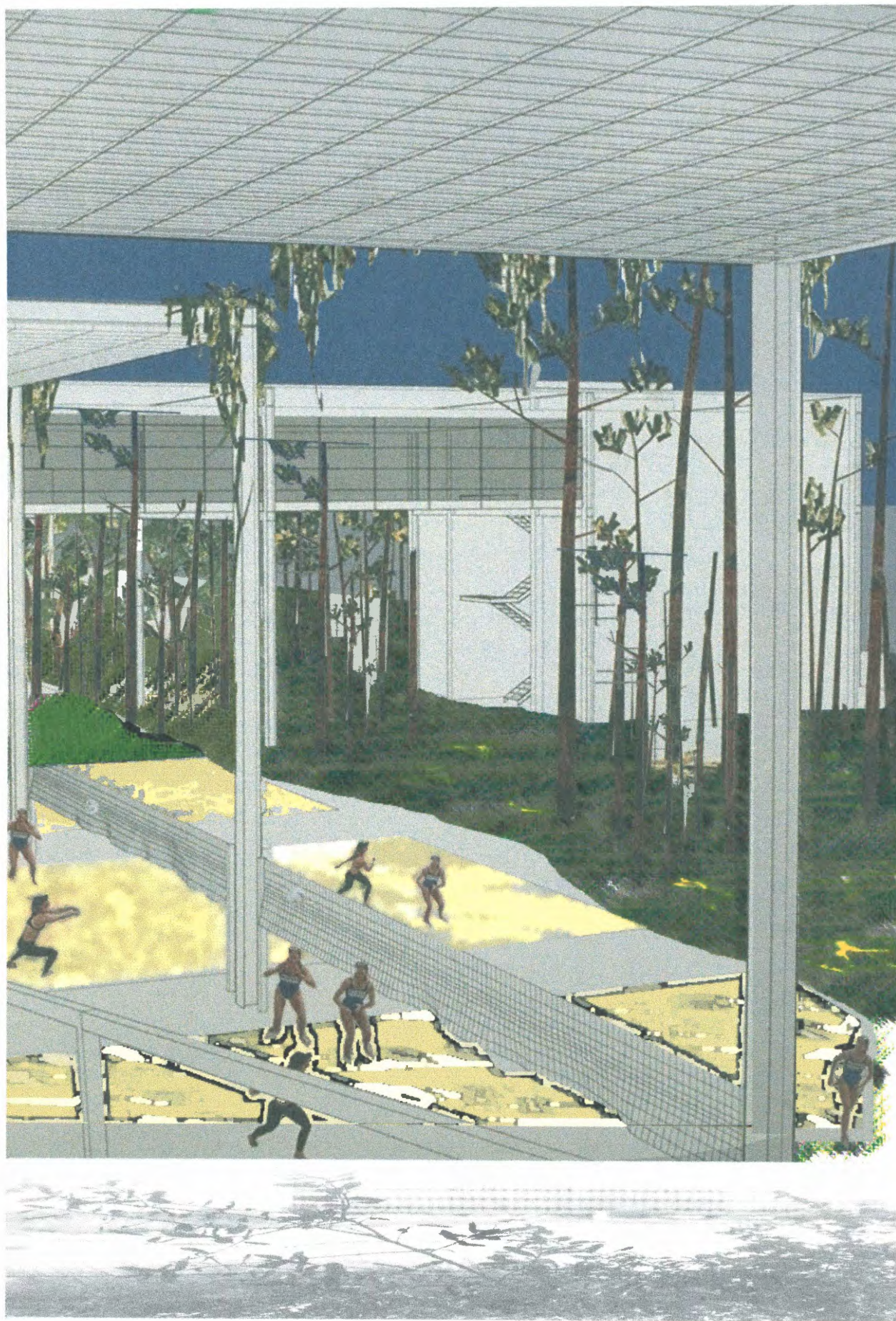






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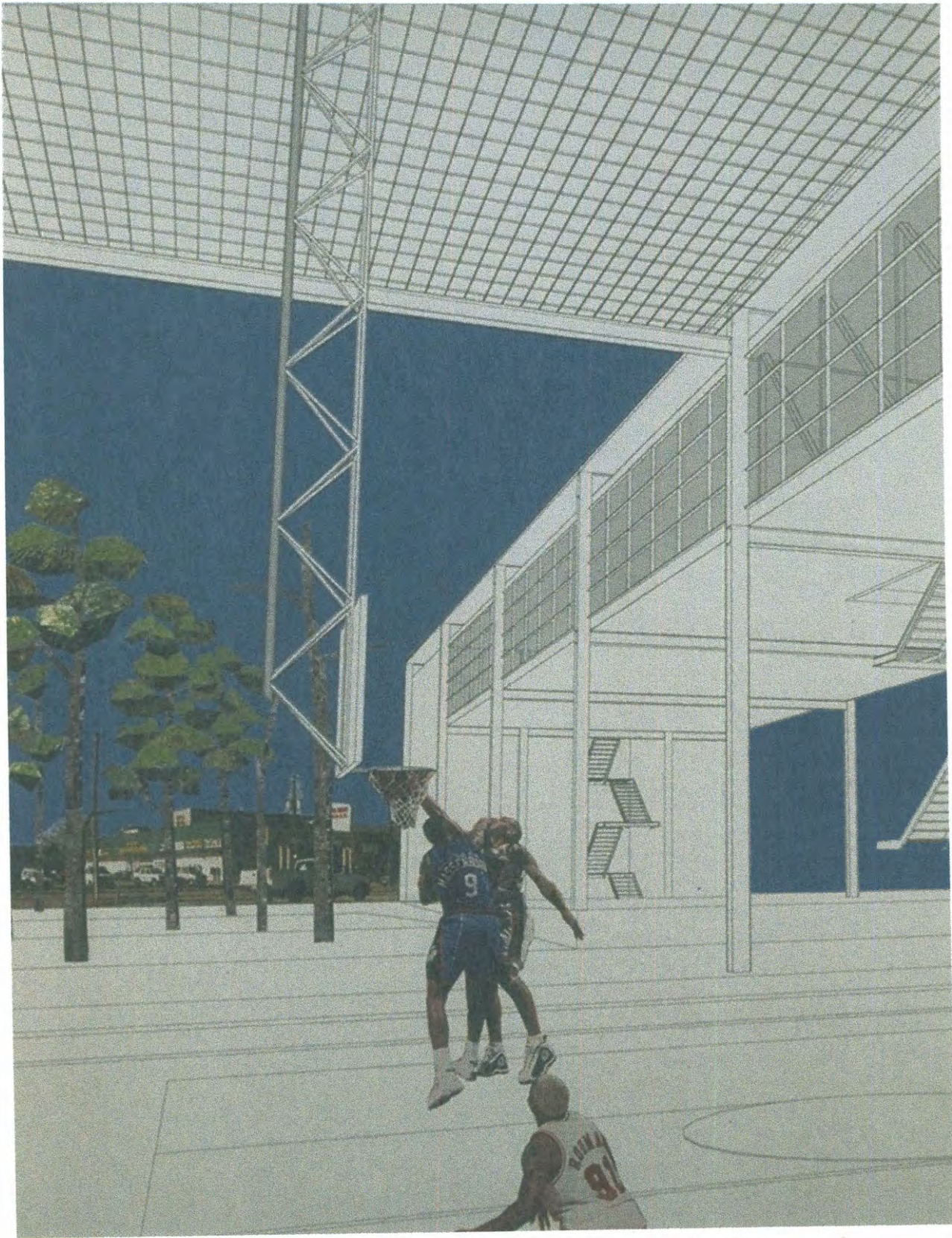


stranger things have happened.

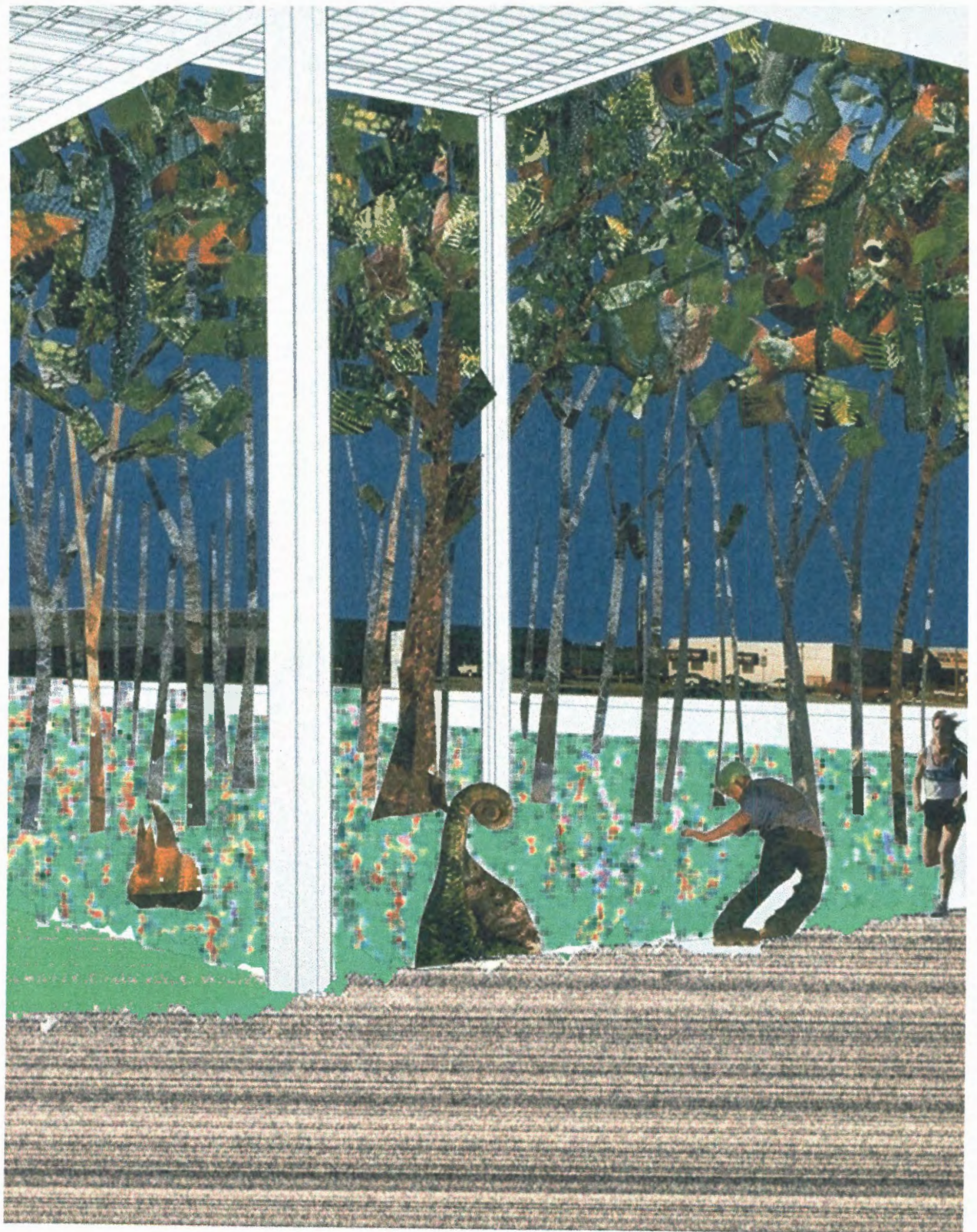




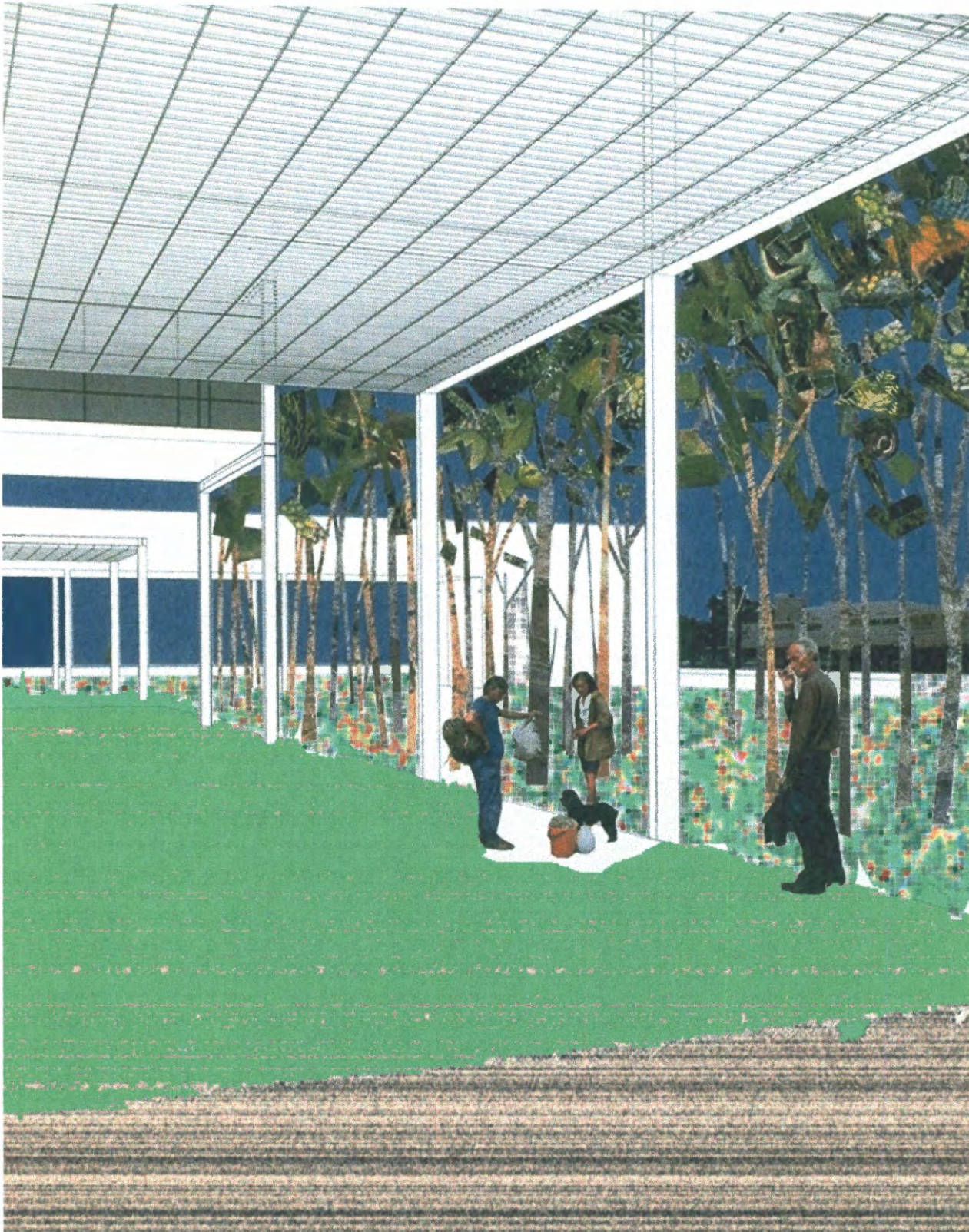
The Rockets are two games up on the Wolves in the first round. They don't look like they're in form to take on the Bulls but...



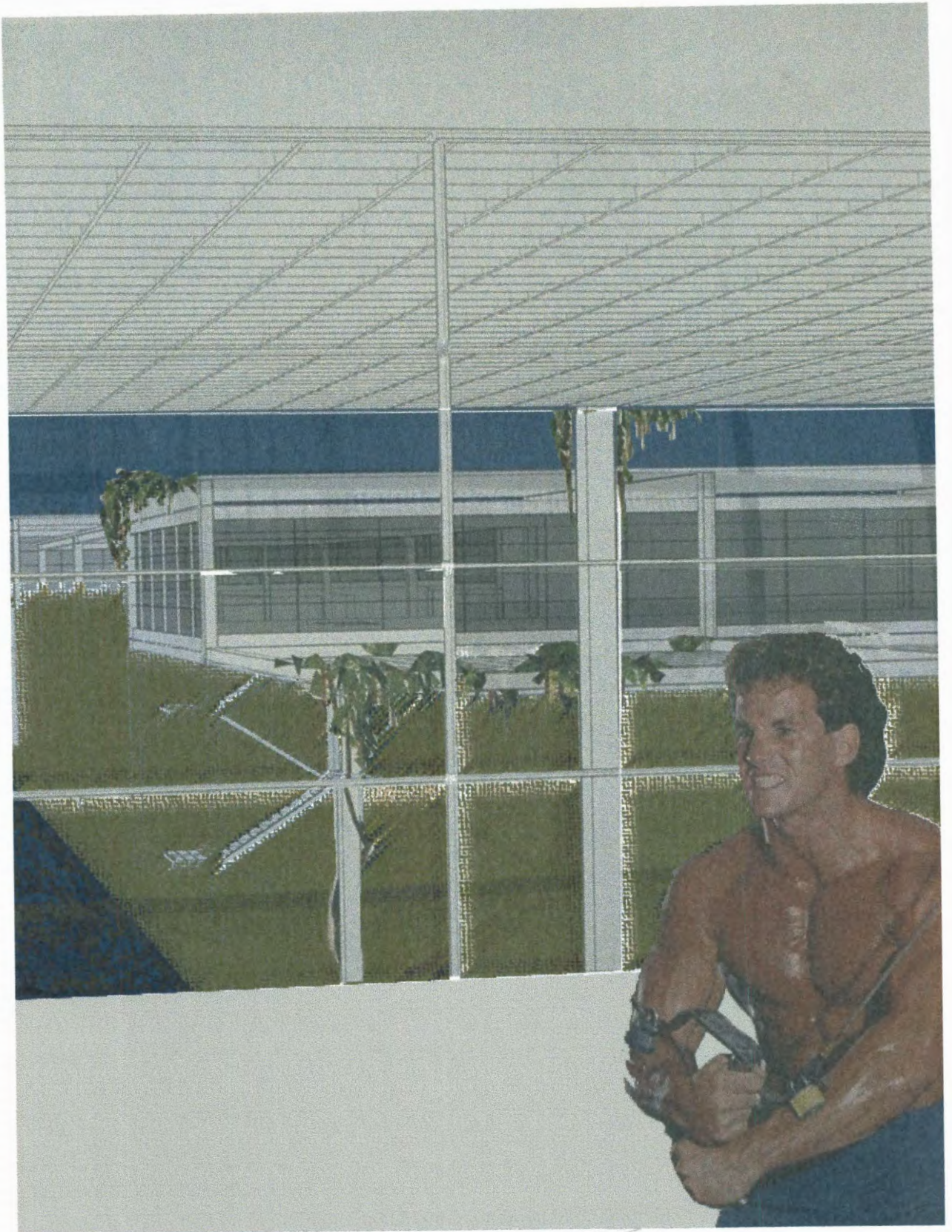
Houston is diverse. Culturally, politically, and ideologically fragmented. As arbitrary as they might be the lines on the court come closer than any others to achieving consensus.



Some sociologists say that people sniff glue out of boredom, to escape reality. In architecture school noxious adhesives are often used and some students complain. Hallucinations may be the result of sleep deprivation.



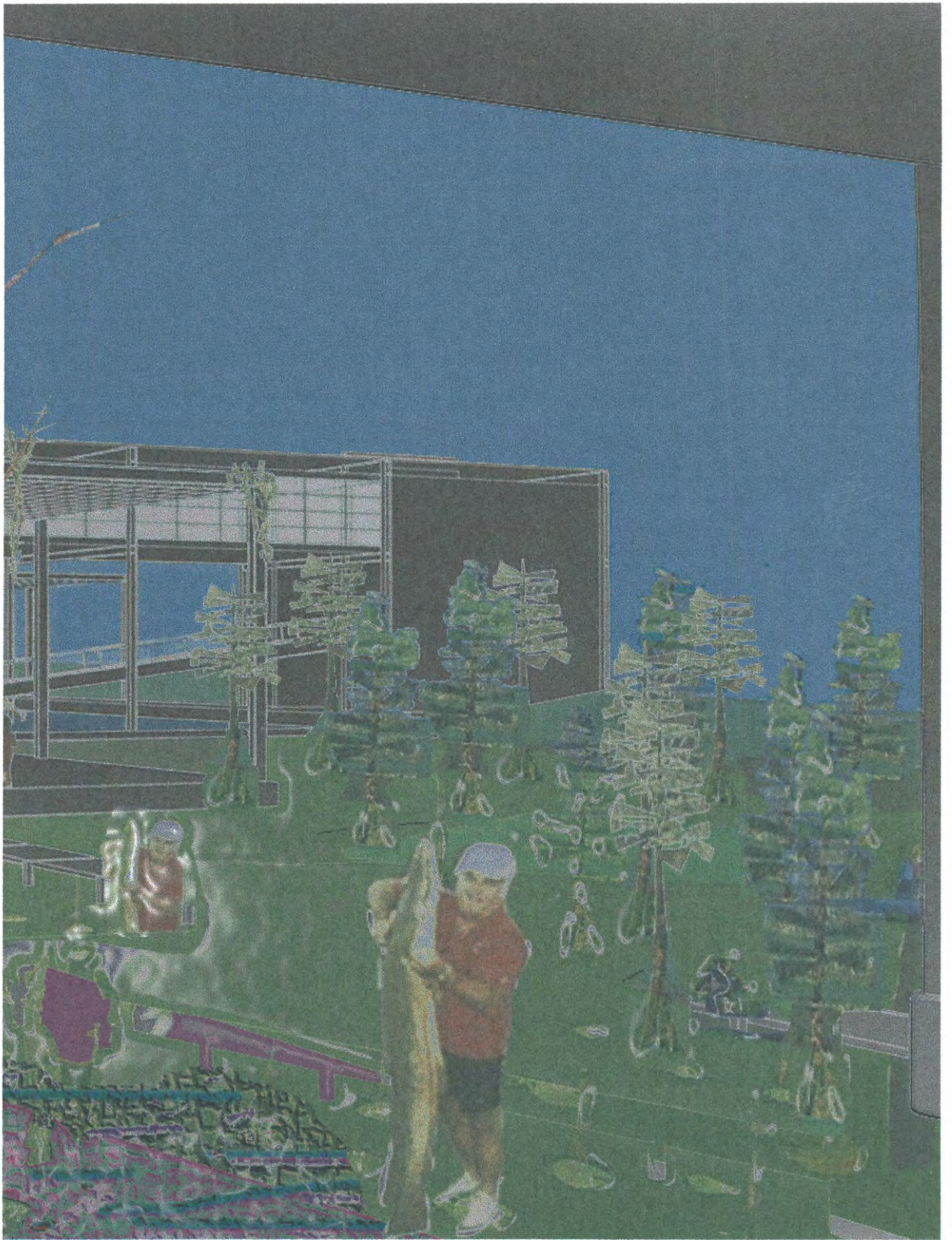
This nice shady area was intended to be used for barbecues and picnics. But the barbecues haven't been installed yet and it has become a popular hang out of glue sniffers.



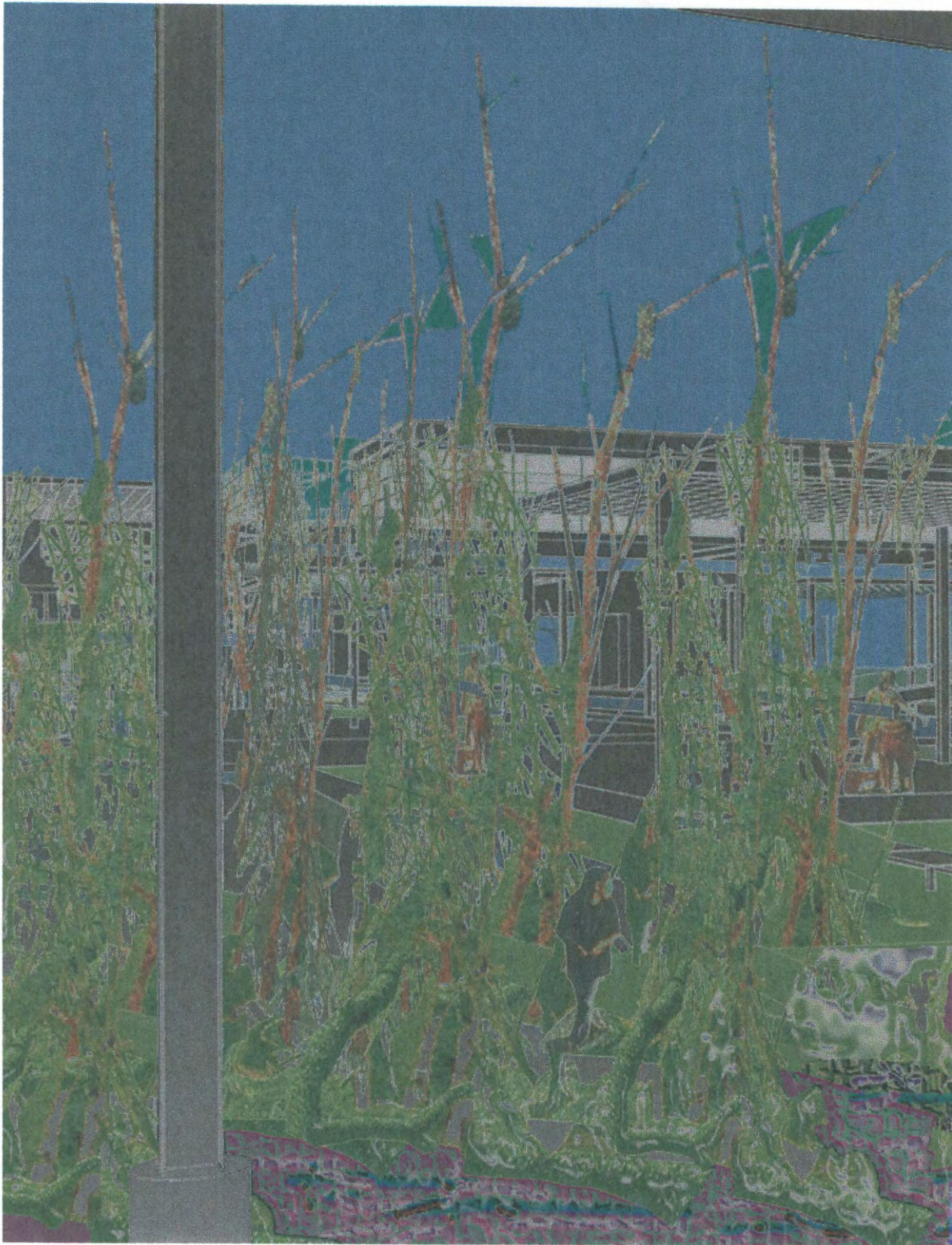
it enjoys great views of the surroundings including the pool and great lawn. Here is a friendly Houstonian demonstrating the chest curl.



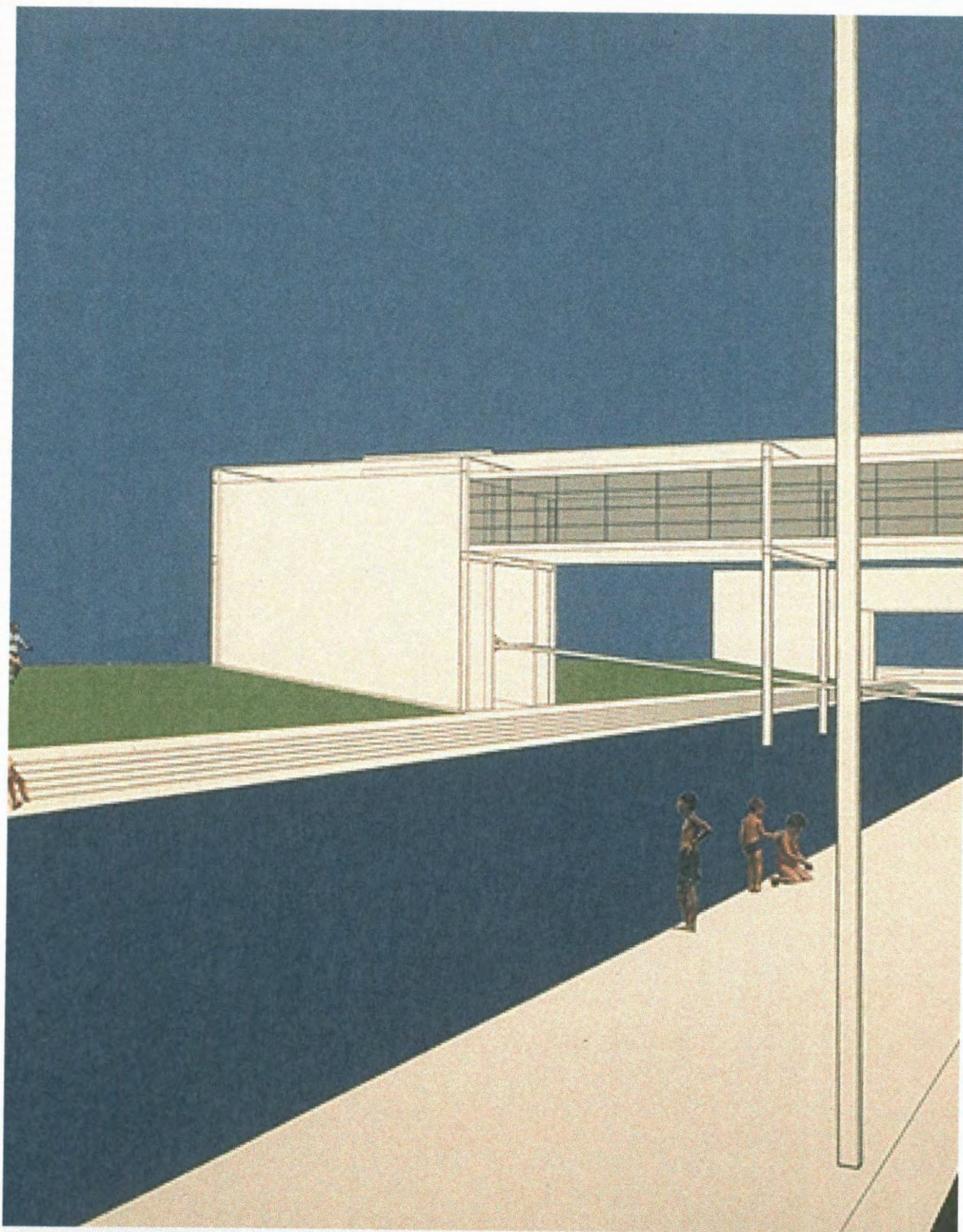
Many enjoy working out at the Houston Recreational Athletic Facility's first-rate gym. Like all the buildings in the complex



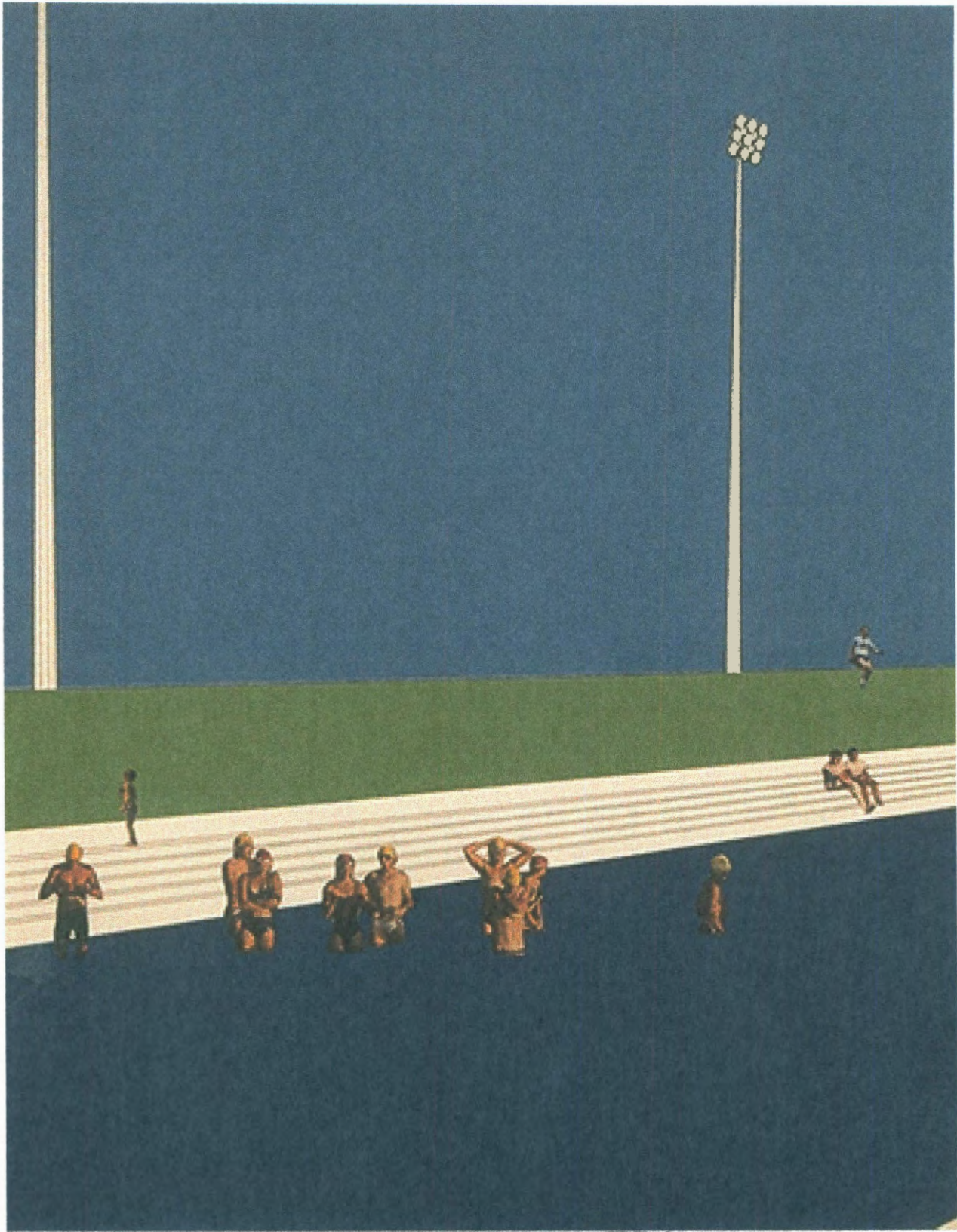
At the south end of the site the giant pool drains into a pond which ebbs and floods over a swampy plane.



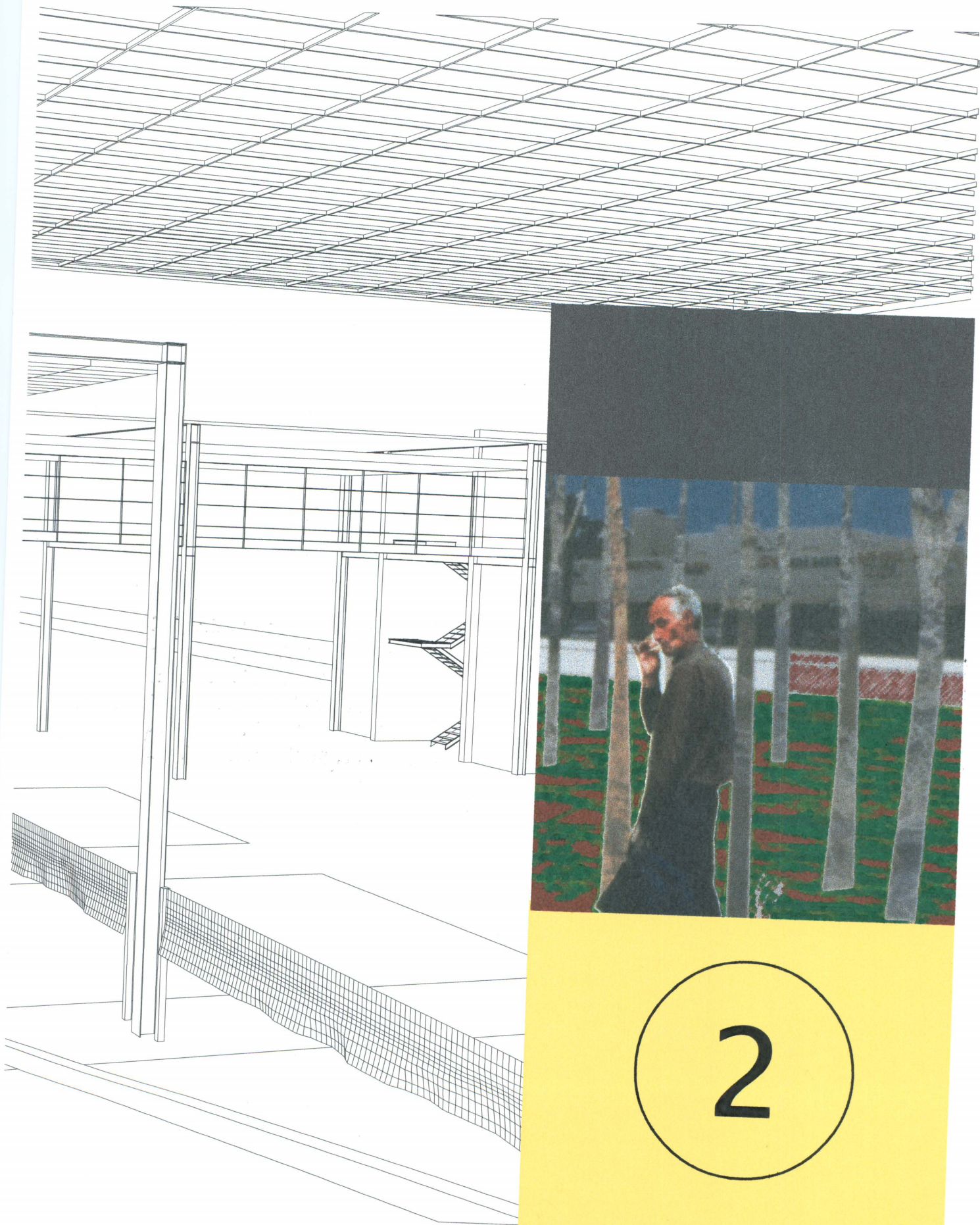
Houston is a swamp and a jungle. The harder people try to conceal this fact the more obvious it becomes.



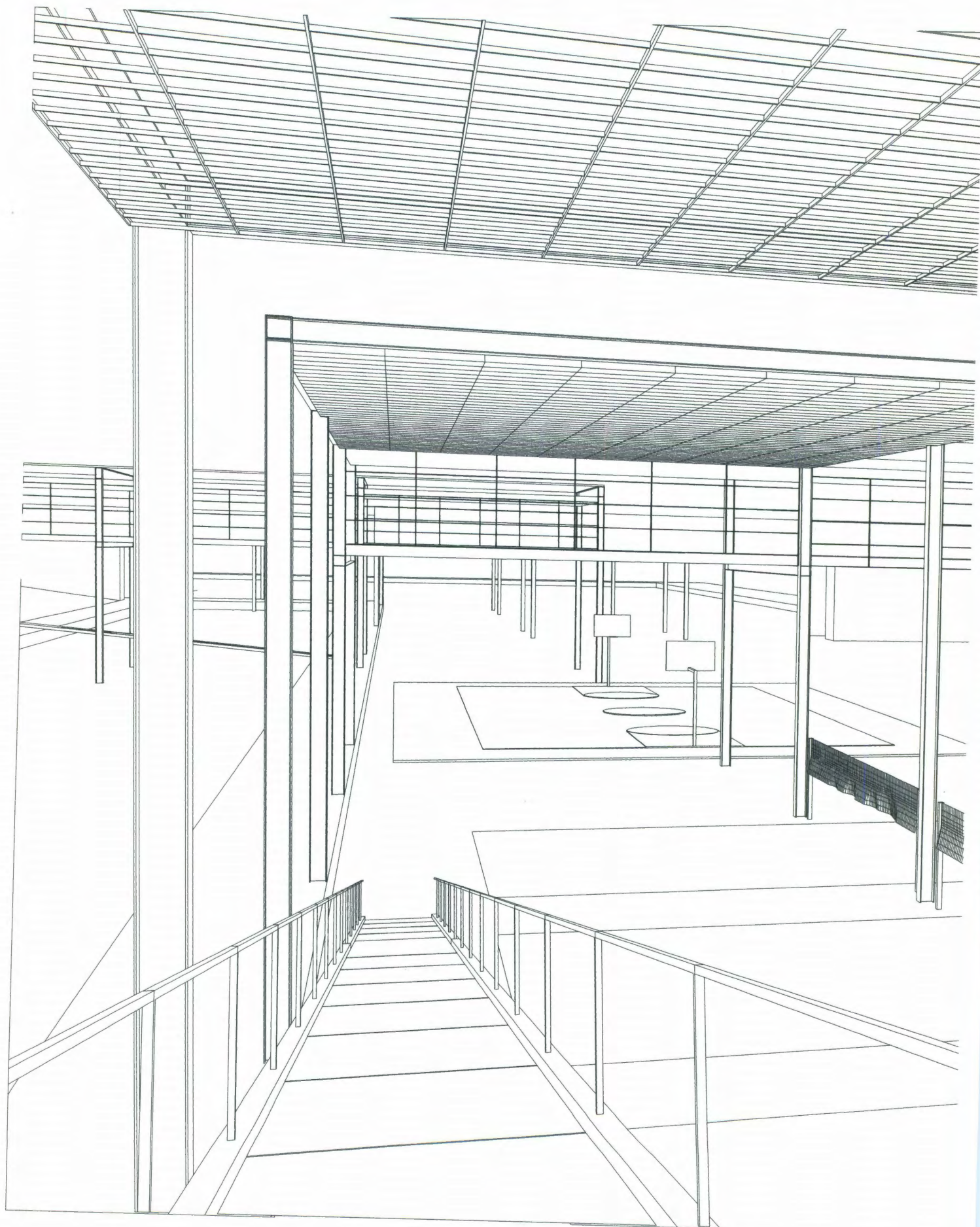
a place for people to cool off and chill out. Every city needs a pool, the hotter the city the bigger the pool, Houston needs a colossal pool.

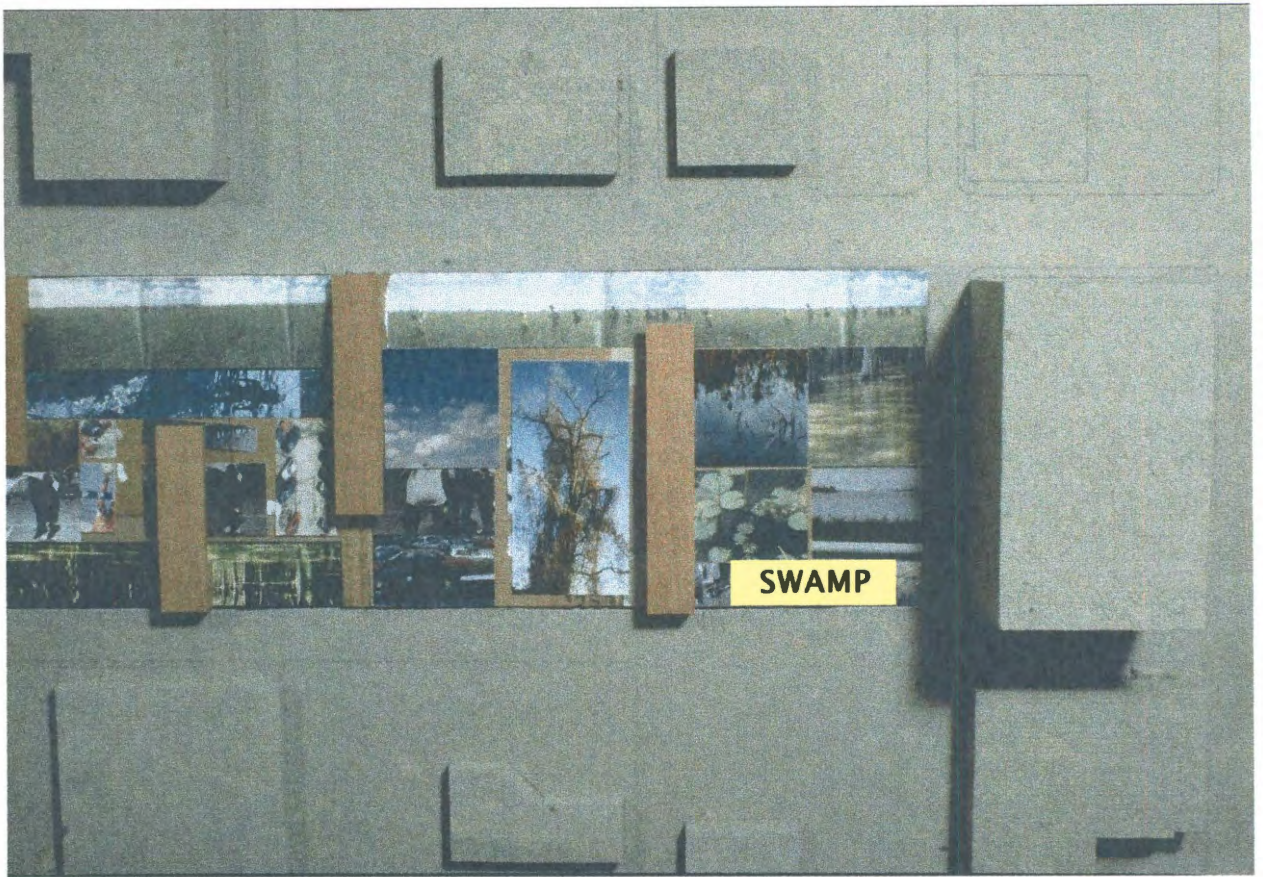


Houston is a city of water and a city of heat. A hot hot wet city. Houston needs a pool...



2

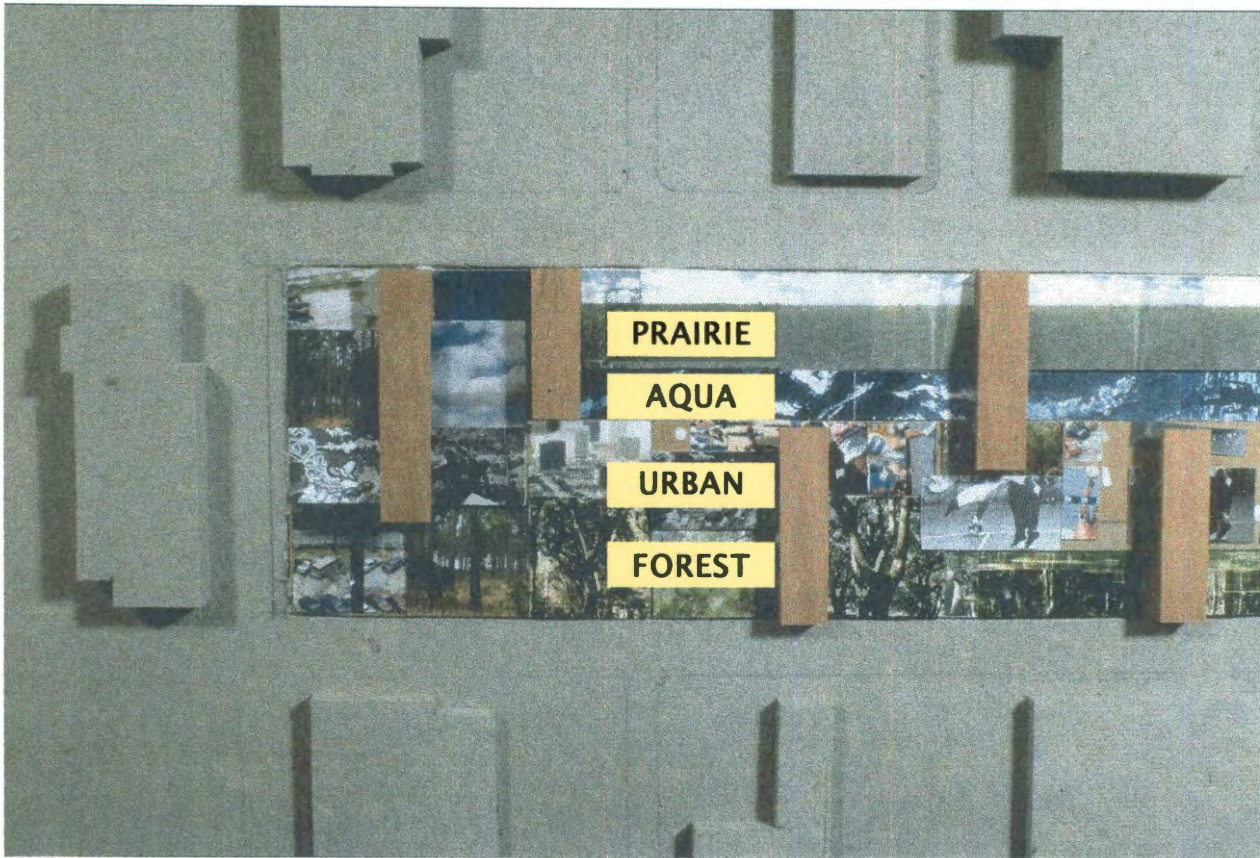




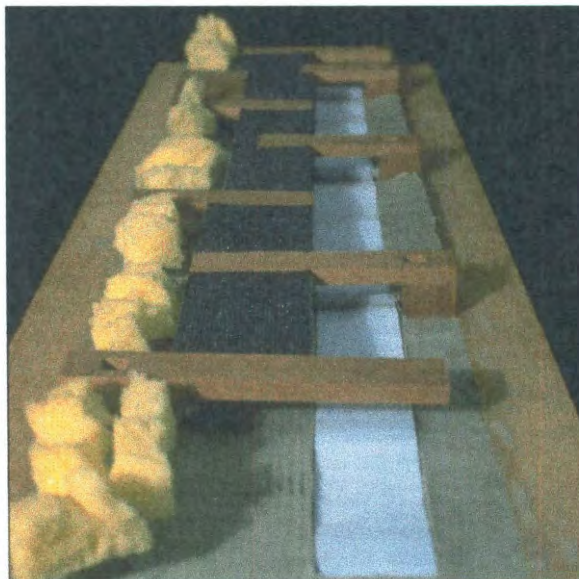
constructing common ground
The Houston Recreational Athletic Facility

Perhaps it is overly optimistic to propose a common ground. Like all American cities, Houston is diverse; culturally, ideologically, and politically fragmented...





To accommodate the expansive nature of the idealized landscapes the site is divided lengthwise into a series of bands. Elevated enclosures which support the program (a recreational athletic facility and park) float above and cut across the bands without disrupting them. The conglomeration of elevated enclosures and canopies forms a colossal and “holey roof”, sheltering the ground plane from Houston’s harsh sun and rain. This massive area of shade results in a convection which flows across the pool, cooling those on the sloping lawn beyond.



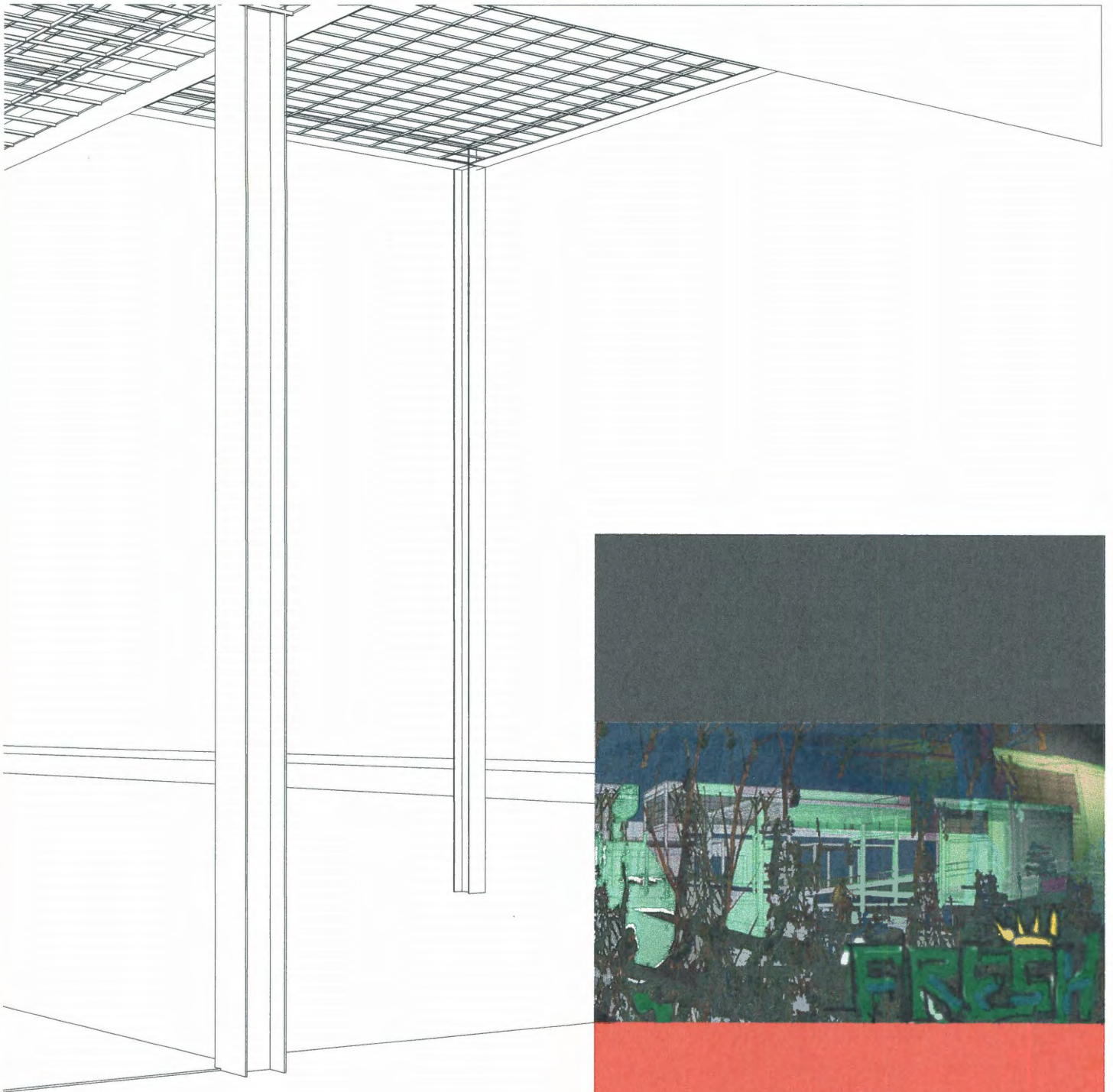


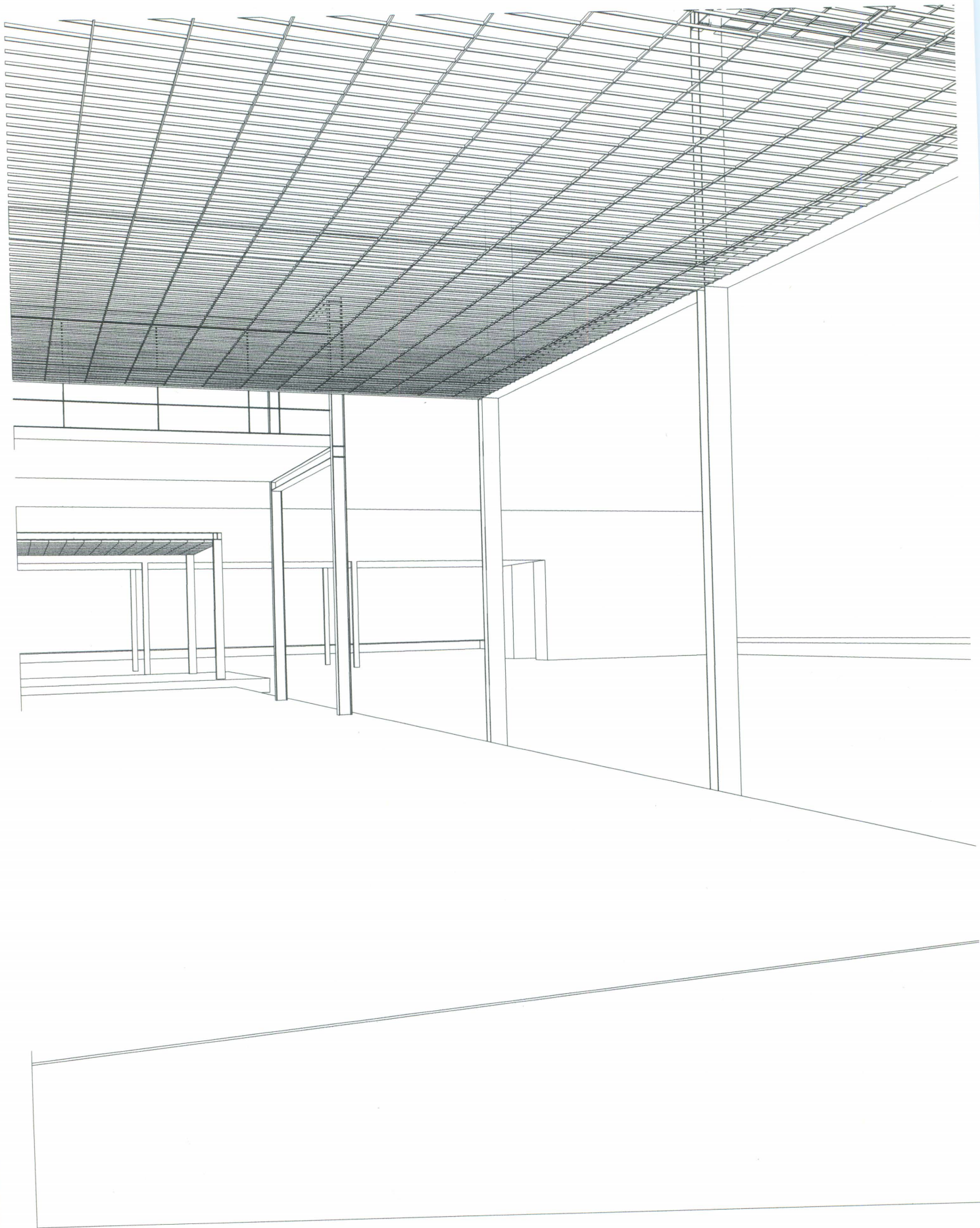
FRAGMENTATION, EXAGGERATION, RECONFIGURATION

This collage operates on the fragmented site by exaggerating conditions which are existing or latent states of the site. The latent states are idealized landscapes which occur in and around Houston. The city exists at the confluence of a number of diverse ecosystems: the piny woods to the north, the prairie to the west and the Gulf coast, bays, marsh lands and swamps to the east and south. Thus the condition depicted in the collage is already happening, however at a much different scale. It occurs at a scale that supports traditional dialectical readings. The densification of Houstons diversity is an attempt to manifest both the degree of difference and the interdependence of difference at a scale which is apprehensible by the body.

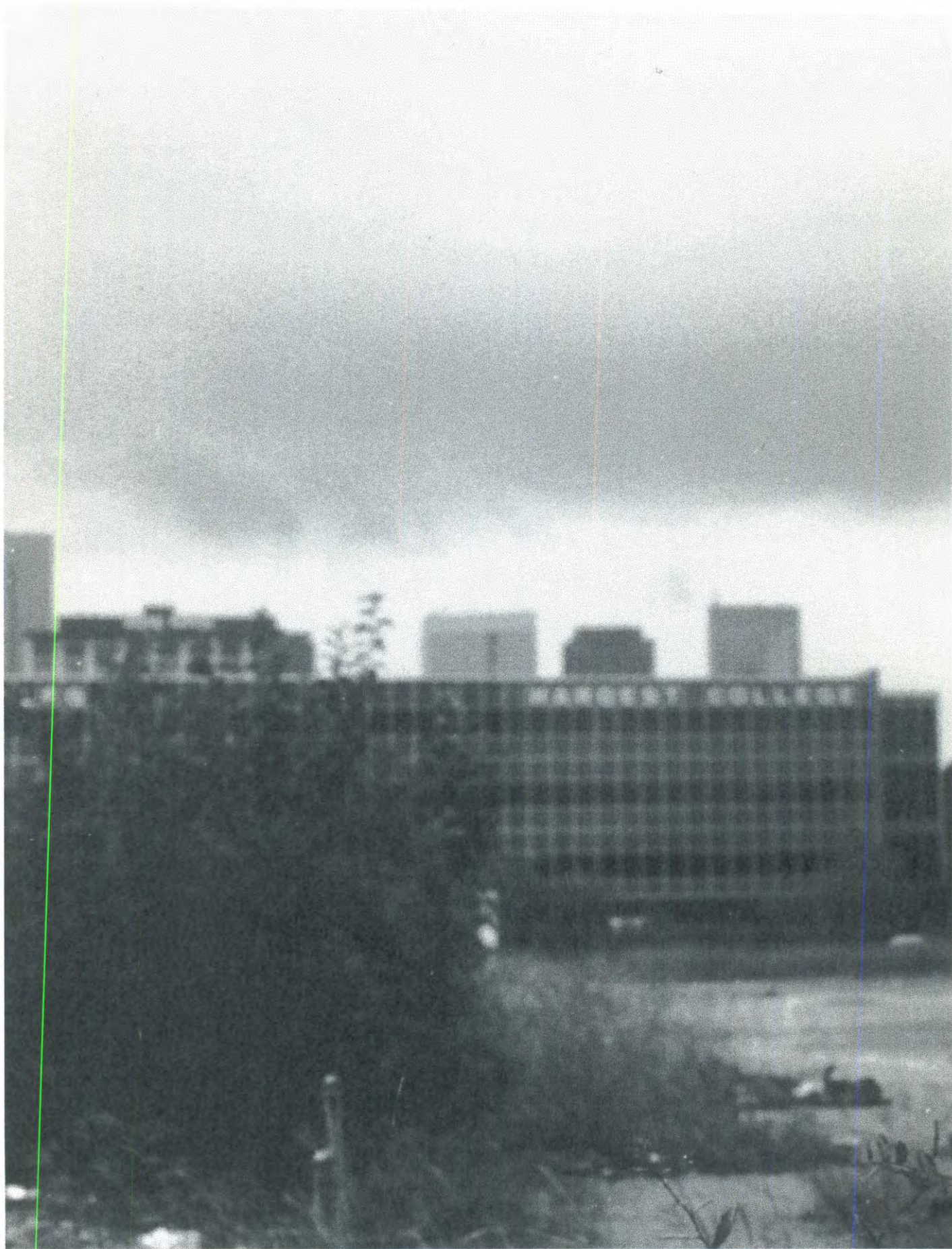


The project employs the technique of the matrix collage which is able to absorb diverse and contradictory elements into a coherent whole without compromising the identity of its constituents. It is important to distinguish between the matrix collage and collages of superimposition which tend towards a figure / ground reading which is inherently hierarchical. The mode of superimposition is analogous to the traditional dialectical view of the relationship between nature and the city. Here nature exists as an original ground for the figure of the city, which in turn becomes ground for the figure of domesticated nature or the park. Readings such as this promote the hegemony of one term, which in the case of urban / natural is illusory.











T H E E M E R G E N T
P O S T - N A T U R A L

In spite of the desolation there exists an exuberance: The presence of "nature" which is both patient and relentless. There is, however, something different about "the natural" as depicted in these images. Somehow tainted, polluted and abused its scabbed and scrappy presence presents a radical alternative to the traditional conception of nature as pristine, or virgin. Nature is no longer a preexisting original state which exists as the ground for the "unnatural" interventions of man. [Pollak] The site occupies a conceptual gap between urban and natural making it fertile ground for the development of possibilities not determined by existing categories.



THE POST-URBAN LANDSCAPE

The Mid-town site appears both uninhabited and uninhabitable. Signs, posts, and sidewalks which bear some relationship to the body only seem to emphasize the absurdity of someone actually inhabiting this landscape, of somebody travelling a path through and to nowhere. A city without people can not be considered urban.

